U.S. Rep. Allen West's first town hall meeting since voting for a controversial Medicare proposal saw three hecklers removed -- one in handcuffs -- from a generally supportive crowd of about 500.

The Tuesday night meeting was West's first meeting with constituents since his April 15 vote for a Republican budget that includes a revamping of Medicare. For those now under 55, the plan drafted by House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., would change Medicare from a defined-benefit program to one in which the government subsidizes premiums paid to private insurance plans.

The plan -- which is considered doomed in the Democrat-controlled Senate -- has drawn criticism from Democrats, who have targeted West and other House Republicans with radio ads and phone calls blasting the vote.

Earlier Tuesday, a town hall meeting in Orlando hosted by freshman Rep. Daniel Webster, R-Orlando, was disrupted by hecklers and audience members shouting at each other.

At roughly the same time in Wisconsin, Ryan faced a packed town meeting, occasional boos and a skeptical audience as he tried to lay out his party's rationale for overhauling the health insurance program for retirees, according to The New York Times.

Outside the sprawling campus of Calvary Chapel, where West's meeting was held in a theater, about 15 demonstrators carried signs criticizing the Medicare proposal.

Inside the meeting, West was less than a minute into his remarks tonight when two or three men began shouting from the audience.

"How about our Medicare that you're stealing?" shouted one.

"How about allowing questions from the audience?" shouted another man, apparently dissatisfied with West's decision to answer written questions submitted by audience members before the meeting.

At West's previous town halls, members of the public lined up to ask him questions in person, sometimes waiting 30 minutes or more to do so.

"What you have seen happen previously is you get such a line of people and a lot of folks want to come up and proseletyze for six or seven minutes and you're really not getting to the questions that people want to have answered," West said after the meeting.

West, who has gone back and forth with critics at his previous meetings, said the written format was not an effort to avoid tough questions.

"I don't duck," West said.

During the meeting, West had responded to a question about Medicare when Nicole Sandler of Coral Springs, a former radio host on the liberal Air America network, began shouting from the audience.

Other audience members began shouting at her and a police officer led her out.

"This is supposed to be a town hall meeting. That means back-and-forth," Sandler said as she exited.

Sandler argued with a Fort Lauderdale police officer in the lobby who told her to leave the building. After she yelled at the officer for placing his hand on her, she was arrested for "trespassing after warning" and led away in handcuffs.

West's staff said more than 300 written questions were submitted on cards. Two employees of an organization affiliated with Calvary Chapel organized the cards by subject and read questions to West.

One of the employees said West's staff did not screen the questions and she made no effort to weed out controversial ones.

People who didn't get their questions asked could check off a box asking West's office to follow up with them.

Before tonight's meeting, West defended the Medicare vote as necessary.

"The bottom line is this: If we don't do something to reform this system, it goes bankrupt," West said.

As it is structured now, Medicare's main trust fund is expected to reach "exhaustion" by 2030 -- about the time current 46-year-olds reach retirement age. At that point, revenues are projected to be enough to cover 85 percent of expected costs, declining to 76 percent by 2045.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates Ryan's plan would force future retirees to pay higher out-of-pocket costs -- about $12,500 for a typical 65-year-old in 2022 under Ryan's plan compared to $5,630 under the current system.

At Webster's packed town meeting in Orlando, some attendees brandished signs like "Hands Off Medicare" and demanded that he instead "tax the rich."

Webster, shown in video from station WFTV, sought to defuse the situation by telling constituents that any changes were years away and current retirees would not see a difference.

"Not one senior citizen is harmed by this budget," he said, noting that his new granddaughter was "looking at a bankrupt country."

Democrats, who say Ryan's plan would risk leaving the elderly with inadequate health care as costs rise over the long run, have stepped up efforts to organize opposition at town meetings and other events, hoping to put Republicans back on their heels as Republicans did to Democrats in the town-hall-style meetings conducted during consideration of the health care law.

"We have said from the moment the gavel came down on the vote to end Medicare we would hold them accountable every day in every way," said Rep. Steve Israel of New York, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "That is precisely what we are doing. We encourage everyone to attend these meetings."

Many Republicans say much of the outrage at their meetings stems from Democratic plants sent by MoveOn.org and other liberal groups.

"My town halls are being disrupted by Democrats," said Rep. Lou Barletta of Pennsylvania, whose meetings have been peppered with complaints about Republican policies. "They are apparently being sent to us to do just that. I am not sensing the general public is angered over Medicare reform."

Asked about the disruptions after his meeting, West said, "It's a free country. They can do as they wish, but they're not going to disrupt this process...If people came here to try to hijack this process, we're not going to let them do it."

West, who has been holding two town halls a month since taking office, hosts another constituent meeting tonight in Boca Raton.

The New York Times contributed to this story.

published: Palm Beach Post. 4/27/2011

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